

## COUNTY OF RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY HEALTH AGENCY DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## FREE FLU SHOTS FOR SENIORS

A runny nose, a sore throat, a cough, a fever, a headache and muscles aches. If these symptoms sound like something you would like to avoid, it is time to roll up your sleeve and get a flu shot before the flu bug bites you. October marks the start of influenza (flu) season. It is hard to predict how severe the flu season will be this year, but one known fact is that getting a flu shot is the best way to protect yourself against influenza. "Annual flu shots are important for seniors because they are more likely than others to become seriously ill if they get influenza," says Dr. Eric Frykman, Riverside County Public Health Officer. As people age, their disease-fighting ability slows down, which is why prevention is essential for seniors. It is also important to take other preventive measures such as: washing hands frequently, eating a balanced diet, exercising and limiting contact with people who may have the flu.

The strain of influenza circulating and causing illness changes each year and therefore an annual vaccination to protect against the current circulating strain is recommended. This year's influenza vaccine is aimed at combating the following three strains of influenza virus: A/Wisconsin/67/2005 (H3N2) – like virus, A/Solomon Islands/3/2006 (H1N1) – like virus, and B/Malaysia/2506/2004-like virus.

Riverside County Department of Public Health is reminding seniors to take advantage of the County's FREE Flu Clinics this fall to protect against influenza. Free flu clinics will be held throughout the County starting October 29<sup>th</sup>. The clinics are for individuals 60 years of age or older, as well as high risk younger adults and children with certain chronic health conditions. These conditions include asthma, lung or heart disease, diabetes, kidney disease, blood disease, neuromuscular disorder with breathing problems, those who are immune compromised or suppressed and those who are pregnant. Such individuals are at increased risk of serious complications from an episode of influenza.

Another at-risk group for serious complications from influenza is children between the ages of 6-59 months. Children in this age group and up to 9 years should attend the County's childhood immunizations clinics or one of the County's ten Family Care Centers. Please call 1-888-246-1215 for locations and times.

Due to the limited supply of vaccine and the need to target high-risk persons, flu shots <u>will not</u> be provided to healthy young adults at clinic sites sponsored by Riverside County Department of Public Health.

Tetanus (Td) boosters, which are needed every ten years, will be offered based on vaccine availability. Pneumonia (pneumococcal) vaccine will also be available for individuals 65 years and older. This vaccine is only needed once in a person's lifetime, and protects against certain bugs that cause serious disease. Dr. Frykman recommends that those interested in receiving the pneumonia and/or tetanus immunization check with their medical provider to see if either immunization is due.

Visit the Disease Control web site for the list of Free Flu Clinics.
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